



PEARL HARBOR NAVAL SHIPYARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard Returns Historic “Mighty Mo” to Battleship Row

By Katie Vanes

Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard Public Affairs

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii – Nearly 100 Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard men and women undocked Battleship *Missouri* Jan. 7 to support the return of the floating naval museum to her Ford Island berth on Battleship Row next to the USS *Arizona* Memorial.

“Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard played a key role in winning World War II, so Shipyard workers have tremendous appreciation for *Missouri*’s historical significance,” said Shipyard Commander Capt. Gregory Thomas.

As the 54,889-ton ship glided over the sill of Dry Dock 4 at noon, the “Mighty Mo” entered the harbor waters for the first time in two and half months. *Missouri* had been dry-docked at the Shipyard since Oct. 14 for \$18 million of extensive maintenance and preservation work. It was the first time since 1992 the *Missouri* was serviced in dry dock.

“We are proud of our role in helping to preserve this vital symbol of victory over oppression in World War II — but we are also humbled,” Thomas said. “We are in awe of the great men and women who served on *Missouri* over five decades and in three wars.

“It was particularly moving for Shipyard workers to look upon *Missouri*, sitting proudly in our dry dock as we went to work the morning of December 7, 2009,” he said.

The majority of the maintenance and preservation work was performed by BAE Systems Ship Repair, the lead public-private venture partner with the Shipyard. The Shipyard supported the effort by docking and undocking the vessel.

Shipyard engineers planned the dry-docking, and riggers, shipwrights and other Shipyard workers emplaced 310 8-ton keel blocks to support the battleship. By contrast, it takes roughly 50 to 80 keel blocks to support a modern guided missile cruiser. The docking was completed on schedule, within one minute of the planned 10-hour evolution, and within one foot of each of the 310 keel blocks.

The same engineers and naval architects planned for the successful undocking. A small team from the Shipyard’s Environmental Division also contributed key support during the repairs. Since Oct. 14, 16 Shipyard employees provided around-the-clock environmental oversight. They took turns rotating on three shifts a day, seven days a week.

Undocking the massive, 887-foot-long battleship presented special challenges. “The Shipyard docking team completed extensive preparations to control this large vessel,” said Dockmaster Sonny Del Toro. “During planning, we kept asking how we could make the process better for Battleship *Missouri*.”

Docking Officer Lt. Lorenz Tate pointed out two unusual concerns of the undocking were the watertightness of *Missouri*’s hull and the number of people on board the ship. “It’s different from an operating (U.S. Navy) ship, where you know the

integrity of the hull,” he said. “With (*Missouri*,) you don’t know, given the age of the ship and the age of the hull. You have to plan for scenarios, such as leaking.”

Nearly 1,000 passengers were aboard *Missouri* for the two-mile journey to Ford Island. Their movements had to be controlled during the initial phase of undocking because it could mask indications of shipboard flooding, he said. Furthermore, their safety needs, such as having sufficient life vests and medical services, also had to be considered, Tate said.

About 500,000 gallons of ballast water were placed in selected tanks, voids, and spaces aboard *Missouri* to properly balance her for lifting off the docking blocks without damage to the blocks or the ship.

When flooding of the dry dock began with 53 million gallons of seawater, the docking team started thorough inspections aboard *Missouri* for watertightness. *Missouri* was also closely monitored to determine if the ship was leaning too far to the port or starboard side. This was done to catch any potentially adverse flooding of seawater into the empty tanks that bound the plating, according to Shipyard Naval Architect Jason Morrison.

“In regular spaces, it is one thing (to check for leaks), but it is tough with the tanks, and *Missouri* has roughly 600,” said Morrison. “That's why it was very important for the ship riders to stay very still as the ship lifted off.”

After Dry Dock 4 was filled to sea level, the caisson — the “door” to the dry dock — was removed, and the docking team carefully guided the ship to the entrance of the dry dock. There, four tugboats snuggled up alongside the battleship and began pushing

and pulling the historic vessel to return her to Foxtrot 5 pier at Ford Island. The USS *Missouri* Memorial Association will resume tours of the ship the weekend of Jan. 29.

The U.S. Navy donated the ship to the *Missouri* Association in 1998 as part of the Ship Donation Program authorized by Congress. It is one of 46 museum ships donated by the U.S. Navy in 22 states.

Shipyard Environmental Protection Specialist Gail Shon, a member of the environmental oversight team, said, “(*Missouri*) is a national monument. We have to save it. If we lose this ship, we’ll lose an important piece of history.”

Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard is the largest industrial employer in the state of Hawaii with a combined civilian and military workforce of more than 4,700. It has an operating budget of more than \$650 million, of which more than \$426 million is payroll for civilian employees. For more information on the Shipyard, visit www.navsea.navy.mil/shipyards/pearl.

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